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The Video Compact Disc and the Digital Preservation of Indonesian Cinema

Ari Purnama

THE VIDEO COMPACT DISC

Introduced by multinational electronic corporations Sony and Philips in 1993, the video compact disc (VCD) is an optical disc, 4.8 inches in diameter, designed to store and display audiovisual content. The VCD is technically an advanced modification of the CD-ROM, equipped with an MPEG video codec that can store up to 800 MB of digital data or 72 minutes of recording time. Thus, a feature length movie is typically compressed into two or three discs. Because of this compression, the VCD's image resolution (352 x 240 pixels) is comparatively lower than its predecessor, the laser disc (590 x 480 pixels), and its successor, the DVD (720 x 480 pixels). Therefore, when it comes to visual quality, the VCD does not rank high in the hierarchy of digital media.

THEORETICAL FRAMING

The VCD was the single most dominant digital video technology in many parts of Asia between the late 1990s and early 2000s, and was a popular format for pirating foreign movies. VCD film piracy made international films that were not shown locally accessible to Southeast Asian audiences. It also facilitated the reintroduction of older national film titles to local movie viewers. This chapter traces the history of VCD technology from its inception to its dominant market position in Asia. By employing a qualitative research method, it investigates why and how the authorized VCD, as a marginalized media technology, still holds a valuable place in Indonesian cinematic culture today.



Fig. 20: Officially released video compact discs of Indonesian films from the 1970s and 1980s: RANJANG PENGANTIN (Teguh Karya, 1974), RORO MENDUT (Ami Prijono, 1982), and TAK SEINDAH KASIH MAMA (Hans Manan, 1986). Photo by Ari Purnama.

THE VIDEO COMPACT DISC AND THE DIGITAL PRESERVATION OF INDONESIAN CINEMA

INTRODUCTION

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Having been raised by a Hindi cinema-loving mother in Bandung, Indonesia, the only kind of cinema I was exposed to besides Bollywood fare was Hollywood cinema. Our own national cinema was at its lowest point in the 1990s; thus, Hollywood firms supplied the major cinemas in the city with its blockbusters. It was not until the first year of my undergraduate education in the 2000s that I was introduced to films by Roberto Benigni, Akira Kurosawa, Orson Welles, and Jim Jarmusch. Thanks to an underground library run by former students at Padjajaran University in Bandung, I gleefully discovered an oasis of lesser known yet exciting film titles coming from as far away as Yugoslavia or Iran. These newfound cinematic gems came in two, sometimes three, optical discs that were very similar to audio CDs. The difference was that these discs displayed moving images. These were video compact discs, better known as VCDs. Looking back, VCDs were my portal to international cinema.

Video compact disc technology¹ was the single most dominant video entertainment format in Asia from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s. In that period, the VCD system was the standard platform for viewers to access movies outside those screened by major theatrical chains. In India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, VCDs were also popular for karaoke music video, pornography, and reportage of political scandals.² Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh dub this optical medium as a "Third World guerilla technology," as it offers "options outside, and in defiance of, the major entertainment circuits."³ Indeed, the pervasive usage of VCDs in East Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia established the device as a pan-Asian techno-cultural phenomenon little known in the West.⁴

An important element of this phenomenon in Southeast Asia was the

close relation between VCD technology and digital media piracy. Local film buffs could find pirated versions in VCD format of mainstream and non-mainstream titles from Europe, US, UK, Japan, Hong Kong, and other film producing countries. When the German film and media scholar Tilman Baumgärtel conducted a study on piracy culture in the region, he was astounded by the sheer amount of unexpected titles he could find at local markets in places like Patpong (Bangkok) and Quiapo (Manila). As he puts it: "Who brought to Thailand the films of Harun Farocki, another German avant-garde filmmaker whose films are not out on DVD in Germany, to sell them at the night market in Patpong red light district?"⁵ Indeed, because of the sheer variety of films that film fans could find in Quiapo, this place became known as the biggest "film archive" in Southeast Asia.⁶

The interplay between digital piracy and film culture in Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines became a curious dimension of the Southeast Asian VCD phenomenon. The outcomes of this interplay were multifaceted. Baumgärtel and Gaik Cheng Khoo have argued in separate publications, for instance, that pirated VCDs to a certain degree have helped stimulate independent filmmaking movements and film education in the Philippines and Malaysia.⁷ Writing within the Indonesian context, Katinka van Heeren has pointed out that the pirated VCD network has crucially provided an alternative film circulation channel.⁸ In other words, it gave local film fans access to diverse and uncensored international as well as domestic films not shown in Hollywood-oriented Cinema 21 cineplexes.⁹

Despite the value of these important studies, the emphasis is nevertheless on the role of *pirated* VCDs in Southeast Asian film cultures. As a consequence, the value and function of authorized VCDs—also known colloquially in Indonesia as "VCD orijinal" or "VCD ori"—remains largely underexamined. In this chapter, I attempt to fill this gap in academic research on the VCD phenomenon in Southeast Asia by strictly examining the importance of authorized VCDs in the development of contemporary Indonesian cinematic culture.

My contention is that authorized VCDs crucially provided local film fans and filmmakers the opportunity to watch, exhibit, discuss, and appreciate the canonical works of Indonesian film history. Therefore, authorized VCDs functioned in a way as archival resources that digitally preserved the history of Indonesian cinema. The substantial amount of classic Indonesian films from the 1970s and 1980s, released exclusively on authorized VCDs, points toward the important position this format occupied as a vernacular conduit for the re-appreciation of the national cinematic legacy. In present-day Indonesia, VCDs of Indonesian classic films prove to be indispensable for local film communities such as the Jakarta-based Society for the Appreciation of Benyamin Sueb, as well as for the non-profit national film education initiative Kineforum.¹⁰

HISTORY OF DEVELOPMENT

According to film scholar Shujen Wang, the development of VCD technology may be one of the most peculiar accounts in the history of digital media.¹¹ In 1993, two multinational electronics giants, Sony and Phillips, launched the VCD as the video equivalent of the audio compact disc. In the midst of all this, however, the development of the DVD as the leader of the digital recording market was already underway. These early developers knew what lay ahead, namely the downfall of the VCD once the DVD finally entered the digital market in the West. Hence, Phillips and Sony decided to bring the VCD technology to China and tried to sustain the innovation by licensing manufacturing rights to Chinese manufacturers. The main reasoning behind this decision was that the VCD system was better suited for media consumers in economically disadvantaged countries than in developed countries, as I will explain shortly. Even so, they were skeptical about the prospect of this technology in Asia. They turned out to be wrong. This marginalized medium took off rapidly in China and spread throughout Asian markets in the mid-1990s as the primary digital medium for recorded entertainment. The VCD format managed to outperform VHS, Betamax, laserdisc, and, for a short period, the DVD.¹² In the eyes of its original developers, VCD technology was a closed book. To media producers and manufacturers in China and the rest of Asia, it was a newly opened chapter.

What prompted the VCD to emerge as the region's most popular digital format in the late 1990s? Irrespective of its shortcomings, the VCD evidently offered some pragmatic advantages when it came to price, durability, compactness, speed, and reproducibility, and more importantly, censorship-free movie content. Firstly, the VCD was cheaper for consumers than any of the aforementioned optical media. One set of a movie on VCD (typically consisting of two discs) cost less than three Hong Kong dollars (US \$ 0.40) and much lower in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Malaysia. Film fans in Indonesia could own an officially released VCD priced at roughly Rp. 25,000 (US \$ 2.50). In local markets they could purchase pirated versions for only Rp. 5000 (US \$ 0.50) per title.¹³ Moreover, standalone VCD players manufactured in China were far more affordable than those sold by multinational corporations such as Sony or JVC. Secondly, VCDs were more resilient than Betamax or VHS tapes. Unlike videotapes, VCDs could withstand the high humidity level of the Southeast Asian climate. For that reason, VCD allowed a longer period of upkeep. Thirdly, a VCD movie could be reproduced without any generational image degradation. When a VHS or Betamax movie tape was copied, the second and third generation of the copy would have a lower image quality than the master tape. But with the VCD, the copied version would be just as pristine

as the master disc. Thus, when a movie fan rented a VCD from her/his local VCD rental store, s/he could easily copy the discs for her/his private collection, since there would be no loss of image quality. Furthermore, VCDs had neither a regional code nor a data encryption system that protected the copyrights, so the discs could be duplicated as many times as one wanted. Finally, the VCD was mostly popular because of its uncensored content. While international films shown in theaters and on television were typically censored for their obscene or indecent material, pirated VCDs presented the movies in their original state. Because of this, VCDs became the digital format most associated with soft and hardcore pornography. Combined altogether, these variables helped boost the popularity of VCDs not only among lower-class media consumers but also among the urban elite population of Asia.

REPRODUCIBILITY, PIRACY, AND NATIONAL CINEMA APPRECIATION

Precisely because VCDs could be readily copied and multiplied, movie pirates used the technology to clone officially released films from overseas. Canonized films that were never released legitimately in Indonesia—for instance *CITIZEN KANE* (1941) or *THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT* (1999)—surfaced as pirated VCDs. More interestingly, non-mainstream titles released by boutique video distribution companies in North America or Europe became available as well. From the exclusively packaged Criterion Collection DVDs of Rainer Werner Fassbinder to Akira Kurosawa's *SEVEN SAMURAI* (1954), film aficionados could purchase the unofficial VCDs of these releases for an extremely cheap price. At certain shops in the city of Bandung, a collector could find obscure titles from *QUIET DAYS IN CLICHY* (Jens Jørgen Thorsen, Denmark, 1970) to Bae Yong-kyun's *WHY HAS BODHI-DHARMA LEFT FOR THE EAST?* (South Korea, 1989). Due to the clandestine operations of the interregional piracy network, it is very difficult to obtain the exact motives of the pirates in forging these non-mainstream titles. One might ask: Who bought these less popular titles? Research into piracy in these countries is difficult to conduct due to the uncooperative nature of those involved, from VCD retailers to renters.¹⁴ Evidently, there were consumers who craved these kinds of films. I would venture to say that cinephiles, filmmakers, and film educators made up most of the consumers of these less popular titles.

What was the role of the VCD and piracy at a local-regional level for film appreciators, filmmakers, and film educators? Undoubtedly, the VCDs enriched the selection of films. Baumgärtel aptly points out that before VCDs, there were very limited opportunities for local moviegoers in the Philippines, Indonesia or Malaysia to watch international films. Major cinema chains were

filled with Hollywood fare. Moreover, due to the lack of cinema infrastructure in these countries, art house cinema was virtually non-existent. Thus, film fans either had to order videos from abroad at overpriced rates or become a part of an elitist group that traded videotapes of the latest films.¹⁵ The availability of laserdisc movies did not help much either because it was simply too expensive to rent them.

The arrival of the VCD, however, completely changed this situation. Film buffs could find the most obscure international film titles that bypassed both official market and censorship regulations. For filmmakers, of course, this brought in influences and inspirations that benefitted local film artistry. Independent filmmakers like Amir Muhammad (Malaysia) and John Torres (the Philippines), for instance, have explicitly stated their gratitude for VCD piracy which greatly expanded their early education in world cinema.¹⁶ Furthermore, thanks to VCDs, teachers of film studies and film production have been able to show their students canons of cinematic history regularly and conveniently. Previously, departments of film and media studies at universities in Manila had to rely on poorly maintained VHS tapes of a handful of international titles. Pirated VCDs, and later DVDs, enabled film and media professors to show clips from important films such as *CITIZEN KANE* as part of their historical, theoretical, or analytical courses in the schools' film curriculum.¹⁷

But the role of pirated VCDs should not be overstated. In fact, the authorized VCDs produced by legitimate VCD companies in the late 1990s to early 2000s have had an equally important function for the development of local film culture. This role involves the digital preservation of national cinematic history. In Indonesia, films that were considered important historically were released solely on authorized VCDs, and only became available on pirated DVDs much later in the decade. For example, the film *PENUMPASAN PENGKHIANATAN G 30 S PKI* (*THE BETRAYAL OF THE 30TH SEPTEMBER MOVEMENT*, 1984), directed by the highly regarded Arifin C. Noer, was made available for the first time on VCD in 2001 by Virgo VCD Company.

Used as an anti-communist propaganda tool for Suharto's New Order regime, the film had since 1985 been broadcast annually on television on September 30 as a commemoration of national Pancasila Day. Apart from being shown on television, the film was screened in cinemas on special occasions, when schoolchildren had to watch it together with their teachers as mandated by the government. Although the film has left a deep scar among Indonesians, who grew up watching its grotesque rendering of national history, the VCD became one of the most sought-after Indonesian films. Filmmaker Paul Agus-ta and film archivist Lisabona Rahman, in one review, named *PENGKHIANATAN G-30-S PKI* as one of the most significant films in the Indonesian cinema canon.¹⁸

Another important figure in Indonesian cinema whose films are only officially available on VCD format today is the multi-talented comedian and musician Benyamin Sueb (known popularly as Benyamin S). His films are occasionally still shown on television usually during Idul Fitri, the biggest Islamic holiday in Indonesia. Although Benyamin S's films are regarded as important cultural artifacts, most of them survived only as poorly maintained VHS tapes at Sinematek, the Indonesian film archive in Jakarta, Indonesia.¹⁹ When his films became available on VCD, local film fans were able to watch and collect his best work, including INTAN BERDURI (Turino Junaidy, 1972), shown here.²⁰

Some local film societies took the opportunity even further by holding screenings of Benyamin S's films in their local communities. Remarkably, the Jakarta-based Society for the Appreciation of Benyamin Sueb (*Komunitas Pecinta Benjamin Suaeb*, KPBS) still holds screenings and discussions of Benyamin S's VCD movies at least twice a year.²¹ They even boast that they only screen authorized VCDs from their Benyamin S library collection, which consists of 29 titles in total, instead of the pirated DVD versions.²² According to its founder, Iwan Wabe, KPBS prefers to screen authorized VCDs of Benyamin S movies because it "want[s] to pay tribute and show appreciation for the filmmakers who have documented the amazing talent of our idol Benyamin S."²³ From Wabe's statement, we can infer that screening legitimate VCDs of Indonesian classic movies signals a higher appreciation for the local cinematic talents and their legacy. Thus, without authorized VCDs, the contribution of Benyamin S to Indonesian cinema would have been too elusive to witness since television broadcasts of his films are not regular enough to allow for repeated viewing. Furthermore, to show his films using the pirated DVD versions would betray the sanctity of his contribution to Indonesian cinema.

Kineforum, a non-profit initiative founded by the Jakarta Arts Council to educate the public about Indonesian cinema, also makes use of authorized VCDs. Supported by Sinematek, Kineforum screens Indonesian films on various formats in their monthly programming. For some classic Indonesian films it has to rely on authorized VCDs from Sinematek's archive; the mediocre image quality of other surviving formats obliges the use of authorized VCDs as a last option.²⁴ By and large, Kineforum prefers the crisper image of the DVD, and even more so, the celluloid-based 35mm film. For that reason, authorized VCDs here are not as highly upheld as by KPBS. Be that as it may, authorized VCDs possess some archival value that cannot be readily disregarded, as they provide an alternative option to celluloid copies, which are not always in prime condition at the poorly funded Sinematek Jakarta.

DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGY, PEDAGOGICAL FUNCTIONS

To connect this analysis to a broader political economic dimension of media technology, the VCD phenomenon seems to exemplify what Clayton Christensen has suggested as a disruptive technological innovation.²⁵ In his book *The Innovator's Dilemma* (1997), Christensen introduced the notion of *disruptive technologies*, which he refers to as technologies that offer a different usefulness from mainstream technologies. However, these technologies are considered inferior at the outset in terms of performance value and thus predicted to be unable to take the place of *sustaining technologies*—those that "improve the performance of established products."²⁶ Consequently, disruptive technologies are abandoned or shipped to other markets that could potentially sustain them. Christensen argued that, along the way, such technologies somehow find their niche market because they are "typically cheaper, simpler, smaller, and frequently, more convenient to use."²⁷ Gradually, these disruptive technologies become performance-competitive for a certain period, outperforming sustaining technologies. For instance, Christensen singles out transistors as a type of disruptive technology vis-a-vis vacuum tubes. Alternatively, small, off-road Japanese motorcycles were disruptive towards pricey and bulky Harley-Davidson and BMW motorbikes.

Within this conceptual framework, the VCD can be seen as a disruptive technology. It was a media technology conceived by several multinational corporations in economically advanced countries but sidelined to the economically disadvantaged nations so that the DVD format could take over the global market. However, by focusing on the DVD, the multinationals left a gap at the lower end of the market. This is where the VCD emerged as a profitable business venture for local media entrepreneurs in Southeast Asia.

Since the second half of the 2000s, however, the DVD has usurped the primary position in the Indonesian movie-watching landscape. In addition, with the advent of DVD reproduction technology, movie pirates have shifted from using the VCD to the DVD in their illegal operations. Now, unofficial copies of Indonesian classic feature films are primarily available on DVDs. But the value of officially published VCDs of these older films, which were released in the first half of the 2000s by small VCD publishing companies like Virgo VCD and Sarinande Films, remains instrumental in the teaching and appreciation of national cinema to film fans in the country today.

This chapter is based on preliminary research conducted for an ongoing research project on Southeast Asian film cultures. Further study will definitely be needed to gather more findings. However, we can already draw several conclusions from the present study. The local cases outlined in the analysis above suggest the paramount role of VCD technology in preserving national

cinematic history and, in turn, fostering appreciation for the legacy of that history. Importantly, they indicate the unintended ramifications of this technology as a marginalized format. The VCD phenomenon in Southeast Asia, and specifically Indonesia, cogently illustrates film scholar Shujen Wang's thesis on the primacy of VCDs in Asia, whereby a passing and downplayed technology was appropriated and tweaked to fulfill the needs of local media producers and consumers.²⁸

CHAPTER 9

- 1 Before licensing his invention to Bowens, Retel Helmrich produced and sold this prototype of the Orbit himself through his website on the Steady Wing. It has now been taken off the market, though the site is still online. The prototype was made out of Anodized aluminum, weighing 29 oz (825 g) and measuring 12.6 x 22.8 x 5.1 in (32 cm x 58 cm x 13 cm) when fully expanded, folding back to a width of 9 in (23 cm). See *SteadyWing*, accessed August 20, 2014, <http://www.steadywing.com/>.
- 2 One problem with research on new devices such as this one is that many sources are closely linked to and published by the producers/inventors of the device who use this (source) material as part of their marketing strategies or personal experience with it. The information that is currently available on the Orbit originates from descriptions by either Bowens Ltd. or Leonard Retel Helmrich. For this reason, only the technical information found in these descriptions that can be objectively verified has been used. See Leonard Retel Helmrich's website, *Single Shot Cinema: The Most Intuitive Way of Professional Film Making*, accessed February 16, 2014, <http://www.singleshotcinema.com/>; "The Comodo Orbit," *Comodo*, accessed August 20, 2014, <http://www.comodorigs.com/comodo-orbit/>; "Comodo Orbit," *Roberts*, accessed August 20, 2014, <http://robertscamera.com/cameras-lenses/camera-accessories/hd-dslr-accessories/orbit.html>; Justin Dise, "Comodo Orbit Handheld Camera Stabilization System," *B&H Photo, Video and Pro Audio*, accessed August 20, 2014, <http://www.bhphotovideo.com/explora/video/hands-review/comodo-orbit-handheld-camera-stabilization-system>; and "COMODO VB-1850 Product Page," *B&H Photo, Video and Pro Audio*, accessed August 20, 2014, http://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/1027599-REG/comodo_vb_1850_orbit_hand_held.html.
- 3 Some major awards Retel Helmrich received for *SHAPE OF THE MOON* (2004) are the Grand Joris Ivens Award of the IDFA (2004) and the Grand World Documentary Award of the Sundance Film Festival US (2005). For *POSITION AMONG THE STARS* (2010), Retel Helmrich was awarded the Grand VPRO/IDFA Award (2010) and the Sundance Special Jury Award (2011).
- 4 Step Vaessen in the Dutch television program "Zomergasten," *VPRO*, broadcasted August 7, 2012 [my transcription and translation].
- 5 André Bazin, *What Is Cinema?*, vol. II (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005), 16-40.
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 André Bazin, *What Is Cinema?*, vol. I (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967), 28.

- 8 See the Comodo Rigs website, <http://www.comodorigs.com/orbit/>.
- 9 *Stand van de maan*, DVD, 2004, directed by Leonard Retel Helmrich (Goirle: Scarabee Films, 2011).
- 10 See IDFA. "Masterclass Leonard Retel Helmrich," *IDFA* video, 1:56:12, November 19, 2010, <http://www.idfa.nl/nl/tags/event.aspx?id=DFCE959D-16CA-4328-A606-582C38509932>; and Leonard Retel Helmrich, "How to Shoot Single Shot Cinema with the Comodo Orbit," *YouTube* video, 3:03, December 9, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yS4Et3HHNwg>.
- 11 André Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," *Film Quarterly* 8 (1960): 4-9.
- 12 Michael Renov, "Introduction: The Truth about Non-Fiction," in *Theorizing Documentary*, ed. M. Renov (New York, NY: Routledge, 1993), 8. While Renov is one of the first vocal skeptics of direct cinema's claim to objectivity, other convincing early arguments can be found in Brian Winston, *Claiming the Real: The Documentary Film Revisited* (London: British Film Institute, 1995).
- 13 For some of the most recent publications related to this subject by outstanding documentary theorists—among them Stella Bruzzi, John Corner, John Dovey, Alisa Lebow, Bill Nichols, Carl Plantinga, Michael Renov, and Brian Winston—see Brian Winston, ed., *The Documentary Filmbook* (London: Palgrave and Macmillan, 2013).
- 14 For a lucid contemporary critique on what he calls "the Dogma of Direct Cinema," see Winston, *The Documentary Filmbook*, 1-29.
- 15 See Annelies van Noortwijk, "Heddy Honigmann's Contemplations on Ars Vitae and the Metamodern Turn," in *Cine-Ethics; Ethical Dimensions of Film Theory, Practice and Spectatorship*, eds. Jinhee Choi and Mattias Frey (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), 111-123.
- 16 Barend van Heusden, "Semiotic Cognition and the Logic of Culture," *Pragmatics and Cognition* 17, no. 3 (2009): 611-627; and Barend van Heusden, "Theorizing and Historicizing Art" (lecture series, University of Groningen, Groningen, 2010-2011).
- 17 Van Noortwijk, "Heddy Honigmann's Contemplations."

CHAPTER 10

- 1 Unless specified, the term VCD mentioned throughout this chapter refers solely to the optical disc (software) and excludes the standalone player (hardware).
- 2 Cf. Peter Manuel, "Popular Music as Popular Expression in North India and the Bhojpuri Region, from Cassette Culture to VCD Culture," *South Asian Popular Culture* 10, no. 3 (July 18, 2012): 223-236, doi:10.1080/14746689.2012.706012; Thomas Barker, "VCD Pornography of Indonesia," in *Asia Reconstructed: Proceed-*

- ings of the 16th Biennial Conference of the ASAA, 26th-29th June 2006, Wollongong, Australia, eds. Adrian Vickers and Margaret Hanlon (Canberra: The Asian Studies Association of Australia, 2006); Tilman Baumgärtel, "The Culture of Piracy in the Philippines," in *Cinema in/on Asia* (Gwanju: Asian Culture Forum, 2006), 373-398, <http://www.thing.de/tilman/piracy.pdf>.
- 3 Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, "VCD as Programmatic Technology," in *Feeling Asian Modernities: Transnational Consumption of Japanese TV Dramas*, ed. Koichi Iwabuchi (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), 237.
 - 4 In her PhD dissertation on VCD culture in East Asia, Kelly Hu designates the VCD as an "Asian technology" in the sense that it gained unanticipated ascendancy and prominence throughout the Asian region precipitated by the commercial interests of domestic audiovisual firms and media pirates. Hu also explains that in the West, for instance in North America, VCD was popular only within the Asian communities. Thus, one could find VCD movies sandwiched in between Chinese goods at a grocery shop in Toronto's Chinatown, for example. Kelly Hu, "Chinese Re-Makings of Pirated VCDs of Japanese TV Dramas," in *Feeling Asian Modernities: Transnational Consumption of Japanese TV Dramas*, ed. Koichi Iwabuchi (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), 205.
 - 5 Tilman Baumgärtel, "The Piracy Generation: Media Piracy and Independent Film in Southeast Asia," in *Glimpses of Freedom: Independent Cinema in Southeast Asia*, eds. May Adadol Ingawanij and Benjamin McKay (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2012), 197.
 - 6 Baumgärtel, "The Culture of Piracy in the Philippines."
 - 7 Baumgärtel, "The Piracy Generation," and Gaik Cheng Khoo, "Just-Do-It-(Yourself): Independent Filmmaking in Malaysia," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 8, no. 2 (February 2007): 227-247.
 - 8 Katinka van Heeren, "Indonesian Side-Stream Film," in *Asian Hot Shots: Indonesian Cinema*, eds. Yvonne Michalik and Laura Coppens (Marburg: Schüren Verlag GmbH, 2009), 71-97.
 - 9 Cinema 21 has been the biggest movie theater chain in Indonesia since 1987. At the moment it serves 33 cities with 736 screens spread across the archipelago. See the Cinema 21 website, <http://www.21cinplex.com/21profile>, accessed August 25, 2014. See also, Katinka van Heeren, "Indonesian Side-Stream Film."
 - 10 Benjamin Sueb (1939-1995) was a multitalented film actor, comedian, and director known for his absurd and anarchic comedies in the 1970s and 1980s. He won the Citra Award at the 1973 Indonesian Film Festival, the Indonesian equivalent of the Academy Award, for his role in INTAN BERDURI (Thorny Diamond, 1972).
 - 11 Shujen Wang, "VCD Killed the VHS Star," in *Framing Piracy: Globalization and Film Distribution in Greater China* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 49-58.
 - 12 Van Heeren, "Indonesian Side-Stream Film," 86-97.

- 13 This is a rough approximation of currency rate conversion between US dollars and Indonesian Rupiah in the early 2000s when I actively purchased VCDs for my personal library.
- 14 Baumgärtel maintains that they are not willing to give out information about where these pirated VCDs and DVDs came from for fear of punitive measures taken against them whether by the piracy mafia or the government. See Baumgärtel, "The Piracy Generation."
- 15 *Ibid.*, 199.
- 16 In an interview with *Criticine*, a film magazine centering on Southeast Asian cinema, Amir Muhammad expresses his sentiment about the VCD culture: "I think we all grew up watching Malaysian cinema to various degrees, but we are also of the generation that was very much exposed to cinema made in other countries. [...] Because we came of age with the pirated VHS in the eighties and the VCD in the nineties, I think our range of influences is wider. If it were not for these pirated things then we would have been stuck with what was brought here, which is extremely limiting." Benjamin McKay, "A Conversation with Amir Muhammad," *Criticine: Elevating Discourse on Southeast Asian Cinema* (October 13, 2005), accessed January 14, 2014, http://www.criticine.com/interview_article.php?id=18. Cited in Baumgärtel, "The Piracy Generation," 205.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 202.
- 18 Lisabona Rahman and Paul Agusta, "Gie: History, Propaganda, and Perception: A Conversation on Gie," *Criticine: Elevating Discourse on Southeast Asian Cinema* (October 20, 2005), accessed January 14, 2014, http://www.criticine.com/review_article.php?id=9.
- 19 Filmography of Benyamin Sueb, Film Indonesia Website, accessed January 20, 2014, http://filmindonesia.or.id/movie/name/nmp4b9bad4ce6a36_benyamin-s/filmography#.Ut2JQYUo_LY. Film communities such as the Society for the Appreciation of Benyamin S Films (KPBS) and Kineforum still use VCD as one of their primary formats for screening Indonesian films. The primary data concerning their practices was obtained by conducting non-structured interviews with Iwan Wabe of KPBS and Amalia Sekarjati of Kineforum.
- 20 *Intan Berduri*, 1972, directed by Turino Junaidy (Jakarta: Sarinande Films, 2002), VCD.
- 21 Iwan Wabe, personal discussion with the author on August 17, 2014.
- 22 *Ibid.* Their collection of authorized Benyamin S VCDs can be viewed here: Website of the Society for the Appreciation of Benyamin Sueb, <http://komunitaspencintabenyaminsueb.blogspot.nl/p/galery-vcd-original-film-film-benyamin.html>, accessed January 13, 2014.
- 23 Original Indonesian: "[...] karena kami yang tergabung di KPBS ini merasa dengan menikmati film yang original kami sudah ikut menghargai hasil jerih payah insan perfilman di dalam membuat sebuah dokumentasi dalam karya sebuah

film dari tokoh yang kita idolakan.” Iwan Wabe, personal discussion with the author on August 17, 2014.

- 24 Amalia Sekarjati, Kineforum publicity staff, discussion with the author, June 5, 2014.
- 25 For an earlier observation on VCD as a disruptive technology based on Christensen’s concept, see David Bordwell, “Pandora’s Digital Box: From the Periphery to the Center, or the One of Many Centers,” *Observations on Film Art*, accessed January 12, 2014, <http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2012/01/11/pandoras-digital-box-from-the-periphery-to-the-center-or-the-one-of-many-centers/>.
- 26 Clayton M. Christensen, *The Innovator’s Dilemma: When New Technologies Cause Great Firms to Fail* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press, 1997), xv.
- 27 *Ibid.*
- 28 Wang, “VCD Killed the VHS Star.”

CHAPTER 11

- 1 *Motion Control Cinematography, American Cinematographer Manual*, 8th ed. (Hollywood, CA: ASC Press, 2001), 116-117.
- 2 Dominique Noguez, *Une Renaissance du cinéma: Le cinéma “underground” américain* (Paris: Paris Expérimental, 2002).
- 3 See, for instance, David Curtis, *Experimental Cinema: A Fifty-Year Evolution* (New York, NY: Universe Books, 1971), 49; A.L. Rees, *A History of Experimental Film and Video* (London: British Film Institute and Palgrave MacMillan, 1999), 57-58.
- 4 One exception is Carlos Bustamante, “The Bolex Motion Picture Camera,” in *Moving Images: From Edison to the Webcam*, eds. John Fullerton and Astrid Söderbergh Widding (London: John Libbey Publishing, 2000), 59-65, which discusses Maya Deren’s work in particular. By contrast, critics of video art have, it seems, connected “medium” and “message” from the start, from Rosalind Krauss’s essay “Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism,” *October* 1 (Spring 1976): 50-64 to the more recent Yvonne Spielmann’s *Video: The Reflexive Medium* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008).
- 5 See, for instance, Jan-Christopher Horak, ed., *Lovers of Cinema: The First American Film Avant-Garde 1919-1945* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995) or Jeffrey K. Ruoff, “Home Movies of the Avant-Garde: Jonas Mekas and the New York Art World,” in *To Free the Cinema: Jonas Mekas and the New York Underground*, ed. David James (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 294-311.
- 6 Leo Enticknap, *Moving Image Technology* (London: Wallflower Press, 2005), 20-41.
- 7 Scott MacDonald, *Cinema 16: Documents Toward a History of the Film Society* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2002).
- 8 Patricia Zimmermann, *Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), 56.
- 9 James Card, “Perspectives and Prospects of 16mm Film,” *Film Culture* 4, no. 2 (February 1958): 14.
- 10 Several 1950s print advertisements involved such movie stars as Linda Darnell, Bing Crosby, or Kim Novak, as a way to associate Bolex with Hollywood films.
- 11 See Zimmermann, *Reel Families*, 115-116.
- 12 A 1964 ad for the Bolex S-1 announced: “This is a camera that will make you lose your amateur status.” Another 1964 ad stated: “Bolex doesn’t think home movies should look like ‘home movies’. Do you agree?” It went on: “Most home movies are sad. Not the type of sad that makes you cry—the type that bore you to tears... The Bolex S-1... just won’t let you make a mistake.” Examples available at Bolex collector, <http://www.bolexcollector.com/>.
- 13 Jonas Mekas, “Notes on the New American Cinema” [1962], in *Film Culture Reader*, ed. P. Adams Sitney (New York, NY: Cooper Square Press, 2000), 87-107.
- 14 See Maya Deren, “Magic Is New” [1946], “Planning by Eye: Notes on ‘individual’ and ‘industrial’ Film” [1947], and “Amateur versus Professional” [1959], in *Essential Deren: Collected Writings of Maya Deren* (Klingston: Documentext, 2005), 197-206, 152-162, and 17-18; Stan Brakhage, “In Defense of Amateur,” in *Essential Brakhage: Selected Writings on Filmmaking by Stan Brakhage* (New York, NY: Documentext, 2001), 142-150; and Mekas, “Notes on the New American Cinema,” 87-107.
- 15 Theodore Roszak, *The Making of A Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969); and Sally Banes, *Greenwich Village 1963: Avant-Garde Performance and the Effervescent Body* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 114-115.
- 16 Brakhage, “In Defense of Amateur,” 142-150; and Jonas Mekas, “8 mm. Cinema as Folk Art,” in *Movie Journal: The Rise of a New American Cinema, 1959-1971* (New York, NY: Collier Books, 1972), 88.
- 17 Deren, “Planning by Eye,” 161-162: “In the beginning of this article, I said that the methods of production which characterized my films derived from a theory of what a film should be and that therefore the means and the end was organically related. But imperceptibly I ended by saying that if one tries to function honestly as a private individual, rather than make pathetic efforts to imitate the industry in the methods of production, one will arrive at a certain creative attitude towards the medium. Perhaps the fact that whichever one starts with, one ends with the other, is the best indication of how irrevocably the means and the ends are interrelated and how much the end is realized—and I use the word in its original sense, ‘to be made real’—by the means.”
- 18 Deren, “Planning by Eye,” 152.